

TEACHERS' NOTES

“The Boy With The Longest Shadow”

by

Finegan Kruckemeyer



Tasmanian Theatre Company 77 Salamanca Place Hobart Tas. 7005

Introduction

Precise

*Adam and Atticus Brown have known each other since... forever.
Since they sat in a belly together and waited to be born.*

And twins are all supposed to be the same... but they never are.

*When they wake in the morning, Adam's hair is nice and ready for the day,
but Atticus' looks flat and stupid.*

*When they catch the bus to school, Adam sits up the back with the older kids,
and Atticus carries the books.*

*When Atticus goes to say something clever to a girl,
Adam always says it first, and better.*

*And when they stand in the sun together,
even though they're just the same height,
even though they have been for every minute of their lives,
Adam always seems to cast the longest shadow.*

But Atticus has a plan to change all that...

'The Boy With The Longest Shadow' by Finegan Kruckemeyer is performed by one actor, who plays 3 characters on stage and, with the aid of a sound design, includes voices of the other characters in the story. The stage set takes us into the world of two brothers, twins with very different interests and outlooks on life. And even though they are identical twins, it would appear their shadows are a different length.

Images of sporting life and cartoons adorn Adam's room, while Atticus is immersed in the world of books and maths and models of famous places. It is not hard to guess which is the "cool" one.

But Atticus embarks on a plan to change who he is, so he too can become 'cool', even taking the radical step of confronting the school bully, by whose hand and tongue he has often been the victim.

Five days later, after pursuing a different plan for each day of the week, Atticus discovers why his brother's shadow always seemed longer than his.

Background

Every so often one has a convergence of separate thought streams with a happy result. Charles Parkinson, Artistic Director of The Tasmanian Theatre Company wanted to commission the wonderful Finegan Kruckemeyer to write a new play for Tasmanian audiences, but also he says "I was looking for a vehicle for Iain Lang to perform a one man show and I had been thinking about themes around the concept of bullying for a while". One day they suddenly crashed into each other and the result is *'The Boy With the Longest Shadow'*. "While in the first instance we are performing this new work in schools, I have a feeling that like a handful of really excellent works originally written for children (eg *'Two Weeks With the Queen'*) this play will be embraced by the general public as well."

The play was written after preliminary meetings between Finegan and Iain from which the idea of building the story around two identical twins emerged. Finegan then went away for a couple of months and produced a first draft. In the meantime Annette Downs, who is one of Tasmania's leading theatre directors was asked to direct the piece and Jill Munro to design it. The next step was four days of intensive creative development, in which decisions were

made about the way in which the story would be presented, what design principals it would use and how music and sound might be incorporated.

A performed reading was arranged for a group of students from The Friends School in Hobart, where they have a strong speech and drama tradition and the students and teachers were really helpful in giving input to the further development of the script and production.

A simple storytelling technique was developed in which one actor could at once be a narrator, a character being a narrator and a character interacting with another character also played by the actor. This might suggest that the audience would become confused, but the feedback we have had from the students assured us that this would not be a problem. Since then performances of the piece have had overwhelming feedback from audiences that they are never confused about who is who in the story and which character the actor is portraying.

Context: Cultural Significance

Bullying, discovering identity, accepting difference, empathy and respect.

Value: How it aims to impact student learning

There is ample evidence that social rejection and victimisation can lead to severe emotional dysfunction.

In 2006 Dr Jean Healey, an educational psychologist at the University of Western Sydney, released the results of a 10-year study into bullying that demonstrated that bullying in the playground can result in the same level of psychological damage as produced by child abuse. The study was based on surveys carried out on over 3000 students attending four high schools. The survey examined the public and private sectors and included single-sex, co-educational and denominational schools.

The study discovered that bullying and child abuse resulted in comparable psychological damage and involve a similar relationship of power: "Not only are the actual behaviours often the same, there is plenty of evidence that peer abuse can have equally serious and permanent repercussions as other forms of abuse."

- 33.3 per cent males and 15 per cent females said they had endured physical abuse.
- 36 per cent of abuse carried out on children up to the age of 17 is physical.

Healey warned that 'Child bullies often grow up to be adult bullies.'

When school discipline is applied in the schoolyard the symptoms often go underground, in the form of cyber bullying. Behaviour seen in high schools has its roots at a younger age, in primary school and at home, but all too often is not seen or not recognised until it is too late to change. Psychologists recognise that to change behaviour one must change attitudes, which are determined by underlying beliefs. Theatre can be a powerful tool for affecting whole of peer group behaviour by affecting pre held beliefs and attitudes.

For pre and post show discussion

Suggestions for discussion include ideas for pre and post show discussion.

Pre show discussion would cover the nature of performance with particular emphasis on the genre of storytelling, in which one actor plays multiple roles in the telling of a story; the exploration of theme and genre.

In post show discussion teachers may wish to look at the subject matter and themes of the play or further discuss the performance techniques.

Also included in the kit are suggestions, or cues for discussion and links to online material that would be valuable in guiding discussion or creating student projects.

PRE SHOW DISCUSSION

(approximately 20-minute discussion to prepare students for the performance)

What are the elements that make up a play?

Prompts:

- title
- topics
- themes
- actors
- director
- design – use of symbols
- sets (real or fantasy)
- lighting (natural or artificial)
- props
- script
- sound and music composition

What are the different forms of performance?

Theatre is often a combination of these forms. Can you think of any others?:

drama	comedy	tragedy	farce
dance	opera	ballet	puppetry
storytelling	spectacle	improvisation	multi-media

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How many actors do you need to put on a play?

How many actors do you need to tell a story?

How many characters can one actor play?

What other plays have you seen with only one actor?

ADVANCED DISCUSSION

What is the difference between a theme and a topic?

How are symbols used in theatre?

What role does sound and music play?

What is special or unique about a play as an art form?

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

Quiz

Here are some questions to help remind you of what happened in the play. (The answers are on the following page.)

- 1) How much older is Adam than Atticus?
- 2) What year did they celebrate their 12th birthdays?
- 3) Who was Mrs O'Keefe? (clue: where does Atticus hang out most?)
- 4) List the names of the famous walls that Atticus made models of?
- 5) What sign does Adam have on his door?
- 6) List the sporting gear that Adam has in his room?
- 7) Who is the school bully?
- 8) What is his nickname for Atticus?
- 9) What is Atticus' plan for each day of the week?
 - a. Monday?
 - b. Tuesday?
 - c. Wednesday?
 - d. Thursday?
 - e. Friday?
- 10) What instruments does Atticus play in his rap song?
- 11) What is the song called?
- 12) What can you remember of Atticus' dream?
- 13) What does his family have for dinner on Thursday night?
- 14) Who does Atticus meet face-to-face on Friday? What happens?
- 15) Who has the longest shadow, Adam or Atticus?

ANSWERS

- 1) 2 minutes
- 2) Adam in 1999 and Atticus in 2000
- 3) The school librarian (the library)
- 4) Hadrian's Wall, The Wailing Wall, The Berlin Wall, The Great Wall of China
- 5) Keep Out!
- 6) Football, cricket bat, Frisbee, hockey stick, table tennis bats, baseball, gym shoes, baseball hat
- 7) Mike Tanner
- 8) Fatticus
- 9) Plans
 - a. Monday - become Adam
 - b. Tuesday - become a rock star
 - c. Wednesday - become a bully
 - d. Thursday – sleep and dream
 - e. Friday – just see what happens
- 10) Guitar, washboard, clarinet, harmonica, violin
- 11) Cool History
- 12) Walking down a path, leaves blowing, leaves falling into his bedroom, catching leaves, leaves with writing on them, Adam is in the dream, leaves with nice things written on them, a leaf from Adam that says "I think he's amazing", brothers flying over the park together
- 13) Japanese oodon noodles, mixed seafood and fortune cookies
- 14) Mike Tanner – they nod to each other
- 15) It changes with time

TOPICS AND THEMES

What is the difference between a theme and a topic?

The term theme is often used to mean topic or subject. A topic is a subject area (like 'history' or 'food') whereas a theme is an idea (like 'love conquers all' or 'crime doesn't pay'). Ask students if they can identify the topics and themes of the play (and which are which).

eg:

- Twins
- Bullying hurts the bully as much as the victim
- Respect
- If you try to be someone you are not in life, you may end up being very unhappy
- Difference
- Being clever is not uncool
- Nobody is the same as anyone else

TOPIC - TWINS

SCIENCE:

Why are identical twins really useful in medical research?

What is a monozygotic twin?

What other animals are born as twins?

Around one-in-three sets of twins is identical. This occurs because the fertilized egg divides in two while it is still a tiny collection of cells. The self-contained halves then develop into two babies, with exactly the same genetic information.

Twins conceived from one egg and one sperm are called identical or 'monozygotic' (one-cell) twins. The biological mechanisms that prompt the single fertilized egg to split in two remain a mystery.

Approximately one quarter of identical twins are mirror images of each other, which means the right side of one child matches the left side of their twin.

TWINS IN FILM

Star Wars (Luke and Leia)
Social Network (The Winklevoss twins)
Harry Potter (The Weasley Twins)
Alice in Wonderland – (Tweedledee & Tweedledum)
The Shining (The Grady twins)
Matrix Reloaded (The Twins)
Twins (Julian and Vincent)
Transformers 2 – (Skids & Mudflap)

TWINS IN LITERATURE

The Classics

The Bible
Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare
The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare

Children's books

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll
The Bobbsey Twins
The Tornado Twins

Teen & Young Adult Fiction

All the Lovely Bad Ones by Mary Downing Hahn
The Necromancer by Michael Scott
Bruiser by Neal Shusterman
Empire of Night by Justin Somper
Girl's Best Friend by Leslie Margolis
Beatle Meets Destiny by Gabrielle Williams
Her and You and Me by Lauren Strasnick

TWINS IN HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY

Who are some famous twins in history, folklore or popular culture?

- The Ashvins
- Apollo and Artemis
- Cassandra and Helenus

- Castor and Pollux
- Helen and Clytemnestra
- Heracles and Iphicles
- Lava and Kusha
- Romulus and Remus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you know about twins?

Are all twins identical?

ADVANCED

Why did the writer choose to have the story centred around twins?

How would you describe the character of each of the twins?

How did the actor make the two characters different?

TOPIC - BULLYING

What is bullying?

Which of these do you think might be about bullying?

- Having a fight with someone?
- Hurting someone physically?
- Saying nasty things?
- Getting angry with someone?
- Getting your own way?
- Ganging up on someone?
- Sending nasty messages?
- Taking photos/video of someone that makes them look stupid and posting them on Facebook or You Tube?
- Spreading rumours about someone?
- Picking on someone a lot when doing some of these things?

According to the National Centre Against Bullying, there are five different kinds of bullying behavior:

1. Physical bullying: when physical actions such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing, are used to hurt and intimidate. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.
2. Verbal bullying: involves the use of negative words, like name calling, insults, homophobic or racist

slurs, or words used to intentionally upset someone.

3. Social bullying: when lies, the spreading of rumours or nasty pranks are used. This includes repeated mimicking and deliberate exclusion.
4. Psychological bullying: involves the repeated and intentional use of words or actions which can cause psychological harm. Examples include intimidation, manipulation and stalking.
5. Cyber bullying: this is the big one at the moment and is when technology is used to verbally, socially or psychologically bully. It can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

Bullying isn't:

- argument and disagreement
- a single episode of social rejection or dislike
- a single-episode act of nastiness or spite
- one random act of aggression or intimidation.

- Weak people?
- Really clever people?
- Slow learners?
- People with disabilities?
- Really small people?
- Really big people?

Bullying is:

- repeated
- meant to intimidate
- usually done by someone with more power or strength (physical or psychological)

How do people feel when they are being bullied?

- The same as everyone else?
- More or less important than anyone else?
- Included or excluded from the group?
- Afraid of going to school?

Where and when can people get bullied?

- At home?
- In the classroom?
- In the school playground?
- When they are working?
- When they are playing?
- In shops?
- At the beach?
- In a taxi?
- On holiday?
- On the bus?
- On a plane?
- Online?
- Anywhere?

Who do bullies target?

- Sporty people?
- Shy people?
- Strong people?

THEMES

Using the above, think about what you think the main theme of the play is?

A good theme leaves you with an idea of what the play was saying to you, or the message of the play.

Not everyone may have the same idea about the theme because we all see things differently.

The play may have more than one message.

Try and write down the theme(s) as a sentence. For example the theme of the story of Little Red Riding Hood might be: "It is dangerous to go into woods on your own." Or it could be: "Not everyone is as they seem."

WHAT TO DO ABOUT BULLYING

Understand how different people react to being bullied.

Why do people become bullies?

Bullies are not necessarily the biggest kids in the playground - instead they could be the smallest wide-eyed butter-wouldn't-melt-in-my-mouth girl in the class.

Children who bully want to have control over some aspect of their lives - even if it's just making someone's life miserable. Kids usually begin bullying to compensate for something that they're lacking in their own lives. They often perform poorly at school and struggle to make strong and lasting friendships.

How do you stop bullying?

What sort of things should you do if you are being bullied?

Who can you tell?

- **Tell your Mum or Dad**, one of your family, a grandparent, teacher, friend or someone else who you think will listen to you. Ask them to help you work out what to do.
- **Tell a teacher**. It doesn't matter where it happens - in school, out of school or online, teachers want to stop bullying when they know about it.
- **Record it**. If bullying is happening on your phone or the internet, keep messages and posts that hurt you or write down what happened and show an adult.

Stay positive - be confident

Think about positive things:

- what you like doing at school and away from school
- what you are good at
- the people who like you and care about you.

What could you say to the bully?

Tell the other person 'I don't like that'. Use a strong and confident voice. Even if you don't feel strong and confident, fake it!

- Talk with the person who is bullying you (if you think it's a safe thing to do). Ask them if there is a problem that you might be able to sort out together. If you feel too scared to do it alone, ask a friend to come with you.
- If possible, ignore the person bullying you. When they're ignored, kids who bully often lose interest. If that doesn't work, tell someone and ask for their help. Don't try to get back at the person who bullies you. It usually doesn't work, and you can end up in trouble too.
- Hang around people who help you feel good about yourself - friends don't bully. They care about you and are fun to be around. You might also make new friends by caring about others.

What if it happens on the phone or internet?

- don't respond to the message.
- tell your Mum or Dad, one of your family, a grandparent, teacher, friend or someone else who can help you work out what to do.
- ask for help to put a block on your mobile device (iPad, phone) or social networking page so you don't get the bullying posts or texts.

THINGS TO RESEARCH AND DISCUSS

How many people get bullied every year in Australia?

What can happen to someone who is bullied - physically, mentally, emotionally?

Why would someone want to change who they are?

FILMS ABOUT BULLIES

- *Sexting in Suburbia* (2012)
- *Bully* (2011)***
- *Girl Fight* (2011)
- *Never Been Kissed* (Glee season 2 episode 6, 2010)
- *Ben X* (2007)
- *Odd Girl Out* (2005)
- *Rats & Bullies: The Dawn-Marie Wesley Story* (2004)***
- *American Yearbook* (2004)
- *Mean Creek* (2004)
- *The Only Way* (2004 film)
- *Elephant* (2003)
- *Thirteen* (2003)
- *Bang Bang You're Dead* (2002)
- *Heart of America* (2002)
- *Tagged: The Jonathan Wamback Story* (2001)
- *Bully Dance* (2000)
- *Kådisbellan (The Slingshot* - 1993)
- *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (1995)
- *Three O'Clock High* (1987)

SOME BOOKS ABOUT BULLYING

Wonder

by R.J. Palacio

Some Girls Are

by Courtney Summers

The Skin I'm In

by Sharon G. Flake

Bullies

by Jen Jones, Allan Beane

FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN BULLIED

For bullied kids, it's hard to imagine a life without anxiety and fear of taunting or physical abuse, but the fact is, even in what seems like the worst bullying situations, it does eventually get better. Lots of celebrities and famous figures have recently spoken out about their experiences as the targets of bullies, and their stories offer inspiration to anyone who is bullied, whether it's in the schoolyard or the boardroom.

Find out about how these celebrities overcame bullying:

Kate Winslet (film actor)

Sir Ranulf Fiennes (adventurer)

Bill Clinton (former President)

Winona Ryder (film actor)

Michael Phelps (Olympic swimming champion)

Prince Harry (British royalty)

Emma Watson (film actor)

Christina Aguilera (singer)

Tom Cruise (film actor)

MORE REFERENCES ON BULLYING

<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

www.kidspot.com.au

www.ncab.org.au/

www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/bullying

www.MagicTools2OvercomeBullying.com



The Tasmanian Theatre Company was launched on May 27th, 2008 by the Deputy Premier of Tasmania, the Hon. Lara Giddings MHA and luminous and internationally regarded actress, Essie Davis.

The company's vision is to be a nationally significant theatre company that is integral to the life of the Tasmanian community. We aim to produce and facilitate exceptional theatrical experiences, to inspire and entertain our audiences, enrich and invigorate our community and support Tasmanian artists.



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